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Influenza in Alaska & Porto Rico.  
1919











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# INFLUENZA IN ALASKA AND PORTO RICO

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## HEARINGS

BEFORE

### SUBCOMMITTEE OF HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

CONSISTING OF

MESSRS. THOMAS UPTON SISSON, *Chairman*  
JAMES McANDREWS                      CHARLES R. DAVIS  
JAMES A. GALLIVAN                      WILLIAM R. WOOD

IN CHARGE OF

### RELIEF IN ALASKA AND PORTO RICO

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SIXTY-FIFTH CONGRESS  
THIRD SESSION



WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1919



## INFLUENZA IN ALASKA AND PORTO RICO.

HEARING BEFORE SUBCOMMITTEE OF HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, CONSISTING OF MESSRS. THOMAS UPTON Sisson, JAMES McANDREWS, JAMES A. GALLIVAN, CHARLES R. DAVIS, AND WILLIAM R. WOOD, ON THE FOLLOWING DAYS.

MONDAY, JANUARY 13, 1919.

### RELIEF IN ALASKA.

STATEMENTS OF MR. THOMAS RIGGS, JR., GOVERNOR OF ALASKA, AND MR. P. P. CLAXTON, COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION.

### COMBATING INFLUENZA.

Mr. Sisson. You have before this committee a joint resolution for relief in Alaska, which passed the Senate a few days ago, enabling the Secretary of the Interior to pay \$100,000, which is necessary to cooperate with the Public Health Service to combat influenza in Alaska, and in addition to combating influenza, to relieve the indigent natives that may be affected by influenza of their wants.

Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. Out of which I suppose you could buy food and clothing as well?

Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. Will you explain the situation in Alaska?

Mr. Riggs. The influenza epidemic reached Alaska through the regular channels of transportation and affected practically all of the coast of Alaska from the international boundary up to the Seward Peninsula, which is in the northern part of Alaska. Those most affected were the natives; about 90 per cent of the indigency and the deaths have been among the natives. In southeast Alaska we were able to reach the natives before very serious damage had been done, but in places which are not ice free and which do not have winter transportation the epidemic worked great havoc, particularly on the Seward Peninsula, of which the headquarters are Nome. There we have had deaths of approximately 1,000 Eskimos, whole communities having been wiped out. We have at one place alone 90 orphans as the result of the influenza epidemic. We had no funds with which to combat the disease. The Bureau of Education, with its limited fund for medical relief, exhausted all of its money, and the Public Health Service—

Mr. Sisson (interposing). Do you know how much of that fund was used?



Mr. CLAXTON. I can not give you the exact amount because reports are not in, but they were wired to use whatever was necessary.

Mr. Sisson. You did not exhaust your funds for that purpose, did you?

Mr. CLAXTON. As far as any surplus is concerned it was exhausted, because we had not calculated on having anything of this kind at all and it was all budgeted.

Mr. Sisson. You had \$75,000.

Mr. CLAXTON. Yes; that was to be expended in the regular channels.

Mr. Sisson. For medical relief in Alaska?

Mr. CLAXTON. Yes; to be expended through the hospitals, the schools, and our nurses and physicians at various places. It was all budgeted except \$7,000, held for any kind of an emergency toward the end. It is not sufficient for a large emergency like this.

Mr. Sisson. Has the fund of \$75,000 been exhausted?

Mr. CLAXTON. No; not wholly, because we must carry the hospitals to the end of the year.

Mr. Sisson. But all of the unallotted fund has been exhausted?

Mr. CLAXTON. Yes; that has been exhausted.

Mr. Riggs. The surgeon general of the Public Health Service, who had an appropriation of \$1,000,000 to combat influenza, authorized me to engage doctors and nurses where I could get them and that was done as to the ice-free portion of Alaska, but, of course, we could not reach the ice-bound portions. I have authorized, where I have had any funds with which to do it, the sending of relief expeditions for the gathering up of these orphans and have contracted for their keep; I have authorized the purchase of provisions for the indigent natives because they are not allowed to travel and trap, and, as a matter of fact, most of them are dead. For instance, at Cape Prince of Wales, of a population of 300 natives, 5 adults were left alive; at Kodiak probably 50 per cent of the natives died; at Kakutat the surgeon general was able to reach them with a naval collier and so prevent very many deaths, and all along the line I have been controlling travel among the natives so that the disease would not get to the more isolated natives and affect the white population. I have kept the disease well out of Fairbanks, Iditarod, and the Yukon River country. I have authorized up to date about \$107,000. The territory had a small fund of \$5,000 for the control of epidemics but that was gone in no time at all. If it were merely for the relief of the white population I should not come to Congress for 1 cent. I should put that on the territory where, I think, it rightly belongs, but when it comes to what we consider the wards of the Nation, who are not taxpayers and who, in other parts of the United States, are attended to by the Government, I consider that our small treasury should not be diminished by the sum necessary. We need that for our schools and roads; we have not a very large treasury, and we can not handle it ourselves: it has gone beyond our control. There were approximately 2,000 deaths, as I figure it, in Alaska from influenza, which are scattered all over the Territory. The Territory is two and a quarter times the size of Texas, and many places there are without any means of communication. I sent one doctor 400 miles by dog team, an expensive trip. He got to the afflicted community and died.

Mr. Wood. The doctor died?

Mr. Riggs. Yes; of influenza. The Bureau of Education did not have funds with which to handle this, and I simply took the bull by the horns and authorized them to go ahead and relieve the natives. I had to do it. They were dying by shoals. Twenty-five per cent became ill and died from freezing. We probably have 1,000 natives unburied, and the best price I have been able to get is \$30 to bury a native. You have to thaw the ground in order to make an excavation, and these Indians have got to be buried. It is progressing all along the isolated settlements of the Aleutian Islands; it is progressing now toward the Kuskokwim River, if you have the geography of Alaska in your mind at all, which is south of the Yukon. The epidemic is now progressing in here [indicating on map]; the epidemic is on the lower Yukon and is progressing over into the Kuskokwim River section, which has a very large native population. At a little point called Old Hamilton, which is at this point, I believe [indicating on map], of 130 natives, 30 per cent of them died under date of December 28.

Mr. Sisson. How many died at Old Hamilton?

Mr. Riggs. Thirty per cent of a population of 130 natives; that would be practically about 40. It attacks the natives more violently than the white persons; they simply have no resistant power; and the epidemic is not over.

Mr. Sisson. If we should give you this money, would you be able to get that money into Alaska, or the supplies into Alaska, earlier than within 60 days?

Mr. Riggs. I have done it; I have taken these steps, trusting that Congress would relieve me of the responsibility that I have taken. I simply did it to protect what lives I could and to protect other lives by controlling travel among the Indians and the whites.

Mr. Sisson. How much of this have you already obligated?

Mr. Riggs. All of it. I asked for \$200,000, but it was cut down in the Senate committee to \$100,000. I have asked the Red Cross for some relief, but did not receive any encouragement from that quarter.

Mr. Sisson. It seems to me it is a matter the Red Cross should take up, because before the last drive they had \$102,000,000 and did not know exactly what they were going to do with it.

Mr. Riggs. Their attitude is that it might be a continuing relief, and they are only engaged in emergency relief. I confess I did not follow Mr. Wadsworth's argument, but that was the position he took. They appropriated \$525,000 for the relief of influenza in the United States, but of that very little has been made available for Alaska. They did buy some supplies—\$4,000 worth of supplies.

Mr. Sisson. All of us contribute to the Red Cross, or all of us are expected to contribute. The Red Cross is a quasi-public institution for the purpose of not committing the Federal Government or State governments to many of the needs and necessities of the human family. The Red Cross has, I am reliably informed, something like \$102,000,000, notwithstanding what it has been expending in Europe. They recently made this nation-wide drive and will perhaps get \$80,000,000 or \$90,000,000 out of that. But suppose they did not get anything like that amount, the Red Cross still has something like \$102,000,000, and that money must just be lying idle in the banks; they may have it deposited where they are getting

interest on it; but the American people will begin to be a little slow about contributing to an institution that will not respond to a thing like this when they have ample funds to do it.

Mr. Riggs. Mr. Wadsworth tells me that the state of their funds is probably misunderstood in Congress; but in any event I could not get any money from Mr. Wadsworth. I have got to go before the Territory and ask them for \$100,000 if Congress grants me this \$100,000.

Mr. Sisson. Who has been authorized to incur this obligation?

Mr. Riggs. At Nome the school-teacher of the Bureau of Education. The superintendent, Mr. Walter Shields, got the influenza and died, and his assistant, Mr. Evans, is now in charge there.

Mr. Sisson. Have you any information from Alaska by telegram or otherwise?

Mr. Riggs. Yes; I have.

Mr. Sisson. What information have you?

Mr. Riggs. A telegram of January 2.

Mr. Sisson. From whom?

Mr. Riggs. From Mr. Evans, the school-teacher at Nome, which telegram is as follows:

NOME, ALASKA, January 2, 1919.

Hon. P. P. CLAXTON,

*Commissioner of Education, Washington, D. C.:*

Ten villages this district affected. Three wiped out entirely, others average 85 per cent deaths. Majority of children of affected villages saved by relief parties sent by the Bureau of Education. Teachers in stricken villages all sick, two dead, rest recovering. Total number of deaths reported 750, probably 25 per cent this number frozen to death before help arrived. Over 300 children to be cared for, majority of whom are orphans. Am feeding and caring for surviving population of five large villages. Seven relief hospitals operated in affected villages; no trained nurses or physicians available, but splendid work done by white people in charge. Cost to date estimated \$70,000 for native relief alone; will need about \$15,000 this month. May be necessary send relief several quarantined villages owing to regulations preventing natives from trapping, and can not purchase necessities. Impossible at this time to lift quarantine zones in outlying affected villages. Appalling and beyond description. Am giving 90 orphans to mission at Nome to care for at \$10 per month, but hope department will plan for large industrial training school this district next summer. Splendid opportunity for educational advancement for the Eskimos.

EVANS

(Teacher United States public school, Nome).

Mr. Sisson. Is the man who sends you that telegram one of the parties authorized by you to take charge of this relief work in that section?

Mr. Riggs. He is.

Mr. Sisson. Have you any other communications?

Mr. Riggs. I have here a copy of a telegram from Mr. Evans to Mr. Lopp, of the Bureau of Education at Seattle; it is dated Nome, Alaska, January 2, and is as follows:

NOME, ALASKA, January 2, 1919.

LOPP, Seattle:

Baldwin takes majority orphans, Catholic remainder, at price mentioned. About 90 orphans. All accounts not in. Cost to date estimated \$70,000. Am caring for about 300 children and feeding entire villages Igloo, Chinik, Nome, Solomon, Wales. Many families scattered. Death list 750. Probably more deaths; reindeer camps not reported by relief parties. Will need about \$15,000 this month for relief. May be necessary extend relief Shishmaref, as

natives can not trap and have no provisions. Impossible this time to allow them leave villages for fear of epidemic. Shall turn over to Baldwin bedding, etc., but must obtain more from fort. Also bedding, clothing, etc., for other villages.

EVANS

(Teacher, United States public schools, Nome).

I have nothing later than January 2. I have here a telegram from my clerk at Juneau, stating that the Red Cross chapters have been authorized to spend such funds as they might have in the chapters within their jurisdiction, which they have done, and afforded a great deal of relief in that way, but most of this epidemic is outside the jurisdiction of the chapters and so can not be reached.

Mr. Sisson. Why are these Eskimos not trapping?

Mr. Riggs. Most of them are dead, and those who are not dead are ill, and they must be controlled in their villages in order to keep them from going to other villages.

Mr. Sisson. That is not true now, is it?

Mr. Riggs. It is true now; yes, sir; at least under date of January 2, which is the last information I have.

Mr. Sisson. Well, if they are not trapping and you should establish the precedent that the Eskimo will be taken care of if he does not trap, you might not have any more trapping.

Mr. Riggs. No; I think not, for the reason that the Eskimo never has received Government subsistence nor has he ever been taken care of. He is not like the American Indian; he is free to travel as he wants and he receives no help from the Government in the way of subsistence or support.

Mr. Sisson. Did you stop the trapping and traveling around in order to prevent the spread of the disease?

Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir; I asked those in charge to take such steps as were possible to prevent a spread of the disease to outlying districts.

Mr. Sisson. You state that these obligations have already been incurred, but no money has been expended?

Mr. Riggs. That is true, yes.

Mr. Sisson. How did you get the supplies and materials—buy them from individuals who would sell to you on that account?

Mr. Riggs. On my personal credit, my personal word that it would be paid, as governor of Alaska. Nome is not the only place afflicted. I have been reading you telegrams from Nome, where we are in telegraphic communication, but there are other parts of the Territory whose condition is beyond description, although I do not think they are quite as bad off as some of the places I have mentioned.

Mr. Sisson. Of course, this is only from that portion of the Territory of Alaska that is in touch with telegraph offices?

Mr. Riggs. Yes. The Bureau of Education and I have sent relief expeditions to places that could be reached. At Cape Prince of Wales, of a native population of 300 there were only five adults left.

Mr. Sisson. That is in the extreme western part of Alaska.

Mr. Riggs. Yes. We have protected so far one of the largest Eskimo villages in Alaska, at Point Hope, by controlling travel.

Mr. Sisson. I notice you stated in the Senate hearings, in answer to a question by Senator Kenyon, that:

The total receipts from all sources were \$1,056,477.06. Total disbursements, various appropriations made by territorial legislature, \$373,953.95. Balance of cash on hand, December 31, 1917, \$682,493.11.



Is that unexpended balance in the treasury of Alaska now?

Mr. RIGGS. There is an unexpended balance of approximately \$500,000. Our taxes are not due yet.

Mr. Sisson. When does your fiscal year begin in Alaska?

Mr. RIGGS. It is coincident with the calendar year.

Mr. Sisson. So you had, on December 31, 1917, \$682,493.11 unexpended, and all taxes for next year to come in?

Mr. RIGGS. Yes.

Mr. Sisson. Then you have a balance——

Mr. RIGGS (interposing). We have a balance now of something like \$500,000 unappropriated or unexpended.

Mr. Sisson. Why could not that be appropriated for this purpose?

Mr. RIGGS. It could be appropriated if the legislature would see fit to do it, but the Indians are not taxpayers, and the United States Government, in the United States proper, has always taken care of the Indians. They are wards of the Government.

Mr. Sisson. In the United States we have been taking care of the Indians largely out of their own revenues. Of course, there has been a certain appropriation made for educational purposes, for hospitals, and things of that sort, but the Indians have a fund of their own—the Indians in Oklahoma, the Five Civilized Tribes—and pay their own expenses. Then there is a certain fund of the Indians in the Dakotas and Montana, which is administered by Congress, but the Government, while acting as guardian for the Indians, is using the Indians' funds. We took the Indians' lands and those lands were sold; a fund was created and that fund has been divided among some of the civilized tribes, where Congress has decided that they are capable of administering their own affairs.

Mr. CLAXTON. May I say, on the other hand, that the natives of Alaska have no funds at all; we bought them, apparently, with the Territory, and have never recognized that they had any rights.

Mr. Sisson. You can not say that every nontaxpayer in the country is not a very useful part of society.

Mr. CLAXTON. He is a very useful part of society; but the point is that these natives of Alaska only get the money that is appropriated to them, and there is no fund in the banks for their use.

Mr. WOOD. The United States has never recognized any land holdings by the Alaska Indians?

Mr. CLAXTON. No, sir. It is also true, in addition to the funds the Government administers for the Indians, the direct appropriations for two years are as much per capita as the total appropriations per capita for 40 years in Alaska. It is not five times as much per capita each year.

Mr. WOOD. You said a moment ago that this money had already been obligated?

Mr. RIGGS. Yes, sir; authorized.

Mr. WOOD. Has it been expended?

Mr. RIGGS. No; we have not had it to expend.

Mr. WOOD. If I understood you aright a while ago, in response to Mr. Sisson's question, you said that some of the funds obligated would have to be replaced, and that the expenditure was made or was to be made?

Mr. RIGGS. Yes, sir. I wanted \$200,000 in the first place. The Senate cut it down to \$100,000. Now, we have obligations amounting

o \$107,000. We are asking for this \$100,000 to pay these obligations and to pay the rest of our obligations out of the Territorial funds when the legislature shall meet and appropriate it.

Mr. Sisson. You do not expect to refund any of this money? Take, for example, the \$5,000 which you had available of the Alaska funds and the funds of the Red Cross.

Mr. Riggs. No, sir.

Mr. Sisson. None of this money is to go for that purpose?

Mr. Riggs. None of the money already spent.

Mr. Sisson. None of this money will be used to refund any past expenditures for relief?

Mr. Riggs. Not a cent.

Mr. Sisson. This is for obligations for food, clothing, medicine, and doctors' bills already incurred?

Mr. Riggs. For the relief of destitution and the patrol of trails to keep the Eskimo from traveling and to localize the disease.

Mr. Sisson. What do you mean by preventing his traveling; did you have officers there for that purpose?

Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. That constabulary, I assume, would probably be paid out of the Alaska funds?

Mr. Riggs. We have no constabulary.

Mr. Sisson. What do you call these officers that you send out?

Mr. Riggs. Just men.

Mr. Sisson. I am trying to get a term to designate those men or officers or guards or sheriffs or deputy sheriffs, whatever you call them, that stop the Eskimo from traveling.

Mr. Riggs. Yes; we put those out.

Mr. Wood. How was that done?

Mr. Riggs. Simply through the health boards. The health boards of the Territory can issue such regulations as are best fitted to meet the local conditions.

Mr. Sisson. Does your legislature authorize the health board to incur obligations in the case of an epidemic?

Mr. Riggs. Not in excess of the amount appropriated by the legislature, which was \$5,000.

Mr. Sisson. That is not the only fund that the great Territory of Alaska proposed to expend to protect health?

Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir; that was the only authorization.

Mr. Sisson. Have you any statement of the items of expenditure that might be put in the record?

Mr. Riggs. None, except in a general way. Here is a telegram from Nome estimating the expenditures that we will have incurred, \$70,000, and that they would require \$15,000 to keep them going for the month. I have telegraphed around to what towns I could reach by telegraph.

Mr. Sisson. This comes in rather an irregular way. The Interior Department has submitted no estimates to us.

Mr. Riggs. No; this is absolutely an emergency. It is done with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior. It was such an emergency that it could not go into the regular deficiency bill.

Mr. Sisson. If the Secretary of the Interior submits any proposition under the strict law and the rules of the House it must be accompanied with an estimate. I was wondering whether or not you

could supply for the record, in the absence of that, as nearly as possible, not an itemized statement, because from your statement a moment ago that would be practically impossible, but the amounts crudely stated and the amounts expended and for what purpose, what character of material, etc.?

Mr. RIGGS. I have here a memorandum of expenditures incurred to date, divided as far as possible into localities. Nome, \$70,000.

Mr. Sisson. What for?

Mr. RIGGS. According to Mr. Evans, it was for the relief of the Eskimos, taking care of the orphans; the patrol which they sent out.

Mr. Sisson. What do you mean by taking care of the orphans—buying clothing and food?

Mr. RIGGS. We contracted at the rate of \$10 per orphan with the missions to care for them until such time as they could be cared for by the regular appropriation.

Mr. Sisson. All of the people cared for are Indians or Eskimos?

Mr. RIGGS. Yes, sir; probably Indians or Eskimos. We had 90 at Nome. We have probably more there now.

Mr. Sisson. When you say that you have 90 at Nome that means in the Nome district?

Mr. RIGGS. These 90 orphans have been brought into the city of Nome. They have been sending supplies and medicines up five or six hundred miles by dog team and have been sending relief parties to the outlying Eskimo villages. I presume that the \$70,000 includes burying the dead. They report 750 dead around there. According to the Bureau of Education they have reports of 1,156 dead Indians. There are more than that. I estimate that there are at least 2,000 dead Indians. We have had to furnish them blankets and food. I have not the exact details of the \$70,000.

Mr. Sisson. Are these people in expending that money keeping itemized accurate accounts of what it is spent for?

Mr. RIGGS. I imagine they are. They are Government men, used to the Government's system of accounting, and I think it very improbable that they would keep the accounts in any other way.

Mr. Sisson. In the expenditure of a fund of this kind, intended for the relief of such dire distress, you must allow a great deal of discretion in its expenditure, and you can not tie it with too much red tape, and for that reason we should have an accurate accounting on the part of those who spend it to be sure that none has been misappropriated.

Mr. RIGGS. I think that will be satisfactory to the Auditor for the Interior Department. He is very strict, and every voucher has to be accurately accounted for. As this is to be under the Interior Department, I think it will be perfectly satisfactory to the Congress.

Mr. Sisson. What other items were expended under the \$70,000?

Mr. RIGGS. I think I have given it as nearly as it is possible for me to do without having itemized lists sent in. We sent dog teams with 10 men from Nome to Kotzebue, where the epidemic has broken out. That will cost, for instance, at least \$3,000. It costs practically a dollar a day to feed a dog.

NOTE.—This price is probably more than it costs to feed a dog. Sixty cents to 75 cents a day will be more correct.—T. R.

- Mr. Sisson. You would have 10 dogs?
- Mr. Riggs. No; 10 men and probably 3 dog teams.
- Mr. Sisson. How many in a team?
- Mr. Riggs. From 7 to 11.
- Mr. Sisson. That would be an average of about 10 dogs for about 30 days?
- Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir; about 30 days.
- Mr. Sisson. Three teams?
- Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir; 30 dogs.
- Mr. Sisson. How many men to a team?
- Mr. Riggs. We sent 10 men.
- Mr. Sisson. Ten and and three teams?
- Mr. Riggs. I say probably three teams; they sent 10 men.
- Mr. Sisson. That would cost you \$30 a day to feed the dogs?
- Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir.
- Mr. Sisson. What do you pay the men?
- Mr. Riggs. Some of those probably are volunteers. I estimate on that about \$3,000. They will be gone 30 days.
- Mr. Sisson. How many people would that relieve, the \$3,000?
- Mr. Riggs. They will visit probably a thousand people.
- Mr. Sisson. Who own the teams, individuals?
- Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir.
- Mr. Sisson. How much do you have to pay a day for a team?
- Mr. Riggs. I do not know. I think in a case like this they probably might donate the use of their dog teams; I think they would.
- Mr. Sisson. And the Government pays the expense?
- Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir. There are at present only about 20,000 white people in Alaska. Twelve per cent of the population went into the Army. For their quota they led all the States and Territories in subscriptions to the Liberty loans, and in the war-saving stamps they headed the list. Ninety-four per cent of the people are members of the Red Cross, and they headed the list in subscriptions to the Red Cross. It is pretty hard on 20,000 taxpayers of the Territory of Alaska to take care of the wards of the Government who were inherited from Russia. Alaska is of more value to the United States in trade than the entire Territory of Hawaii or the Philippines; the volume of trade is more in dollars and cents.
- Mr. Sisson. You have more Indians than white people?
- Mr. Riggs. Yes, sir.
- Mr. Sisson. About 35,000?
- Mr. Riggs. About 27,000.
- Mr. Claxton. Probably a few more than that.
- Mr. Sisson. Do the Indians own property?
- Mr. Riggs. In southeastern Alaska they own fishing boats and some have bank balances.
- Mr. Sisson. Do they own land?
- Mr. Riggs. Some have secured allotments, but very little is done to the land. Very few of them pay any taxes.
- Mr. Claxton. They simply pay to live on the land.
- Mr. Riggs. These are our own people; they are not from Austria, Turkey, Belgium, or Serbia; our own American people, who belong to us. It is a very serious situation.



Mr. CLAXTON. May I add for these Eskimos and Indians that they never have been a charge upon the Treasury, and I do not think anything done now will be taken as a precedent in a large way. The only time when any appropriation has been definitely made for that purpose has been when there was some great calamity like a flood or the eruption of a volcano, and the appropriations for these cases have been very small. The sum total of money expended in Alaska annually for the relief of want has been less than \$2,000 a year.

Mr. Sisson. I do not think that is a condition that we should complain about.

Mr. CLAXTON. We are not complaining about it. I simply give it as a fact. Under ordinary circumstances they do care for themselves and they have not been a charge for any large amount for their support.

## RELIEF IN PORTO RICO.

## STATEMENT OF HON. FELIX CORDOVA DAVILA, RESIDENT COMMISSIONER, PORTO RICO.

## INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC.

Mr. Sisson. You are the Resident Commissioner from Porto Rico?

Mr. DAVILA. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. You have introduced a resolution, I believe?

Mr. DAVILA. No; it was sent by the Secretary of War and recommended by the Bureau of Insular Affairs.

Mr. Sisson. Has a bill been introduced?

Mr. DAVILA. I think no bill has been introduced.

Mr. Sisson. The appropriation is asked for in the deficiency bill, is it?

Mr. DAVILA. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. You are asking for an appropriation of \$100,000 to combat influenza?

Mr. DAVILA. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. I notice your letter to Mr. Sherley is dated December 31.

Mr. DAVILA. Yes, sir.

Mr. Sisson. Have you had any information from Porto Rico since that time as to the condition of influenza there?

Mr. DAVILA. Nothing; but I have a memorandum prepared by the Bureau of Insular Affairs in regard to this matter, by Gen. Walcutt, in relation to the influenza in Porto Rico.

(Said memorandum follows:)

WAR DEPARTMENT,  
BUREAU OF INSULAR AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, January 9, 1919.*

The conditions as to the influenza epidemic in Porto Rico were first brought to the attention of this bureau by the governor at San Juan, in a cablegram received from him on November 6, reading as follows:

"The influenza has become epidemic in many municipalities, and is spreading alarmingly. We have few physicians and little money, but we shall have to attack this problem also immediately."

In a letter of confirmation of the same date, he stated:

"I cabled you also with reference to the influenza. It seems now almost certain that we shall have an epidemic of this disease all over the island. It is

already both serious and alarming in Camp Las Casas, and has broken out in many municipalities from Fajardo to Hormigueros, and seems to be spreading rapidly. Many of the physicians of the island have gone into the military service, and some municipalities have no resident physician at all; and there is so much disease at the camp that they have no doctors to spare. I am hoping to be able to organize the physicians that we have, and to distribute them in some way so as to make them go around so as to cover the needs in some sort of way, but I am not sure that this can be done. In addition to this, there is the difficulty in the matter of money. The legislature will be compelled to appropriate a considerable sum for this emergency, and this, taken together with the earthquake expense and all the other extra cost for war work, sanitation—physical and moral—presents a situation that is truly appalling; but the Porto Rican people are brave. In spite of everything, they oversubscribe by more than \$600,000 their quota for the fourth Liberty loan. They deserve all the consideration and help that Congress can give them and I feel confident that Congress will help if the situation is properly presented."

On November 20 the governor cabled as follows:

"The conditions as to the influenza epidemic are getting to be so desperate that I shall have to call special session of the legislature to adopt extraordinary means for its control and care of its victims. Supply of doctors and nurses wholly inadequate, and available funds for hospitals, medicines, foods, etc., insufficient. I request and urge appropriation by Congress immediately at least of \$100,000 for this special purpose, but what is done must be done quickly."

Again, on November 23, as follows:

"Epidemic situation getting more desperate daily. Legislature will meet Tuesday to do what is possible. Buildings for hospitals, doctors, nurses all insufficient, and food also must be furnished sick. Aid by Congress as requested would greatly relieve and save many lives if given promptly. No money for aid in this matter should be sent here except to insular government or Red Cross."

In response to a cable sent him on November 25, he cabled as follows on November 28:

"Referring to telegram from your office of the 25th instant, epidemic-relief message of Secretary of War much appreciated. There are not less than 100,000 cases of Influenza in whole island, two-thirds of them in rural barrios. Doctors and nurses, unless they know Spanish, should be of little assistance. Sufficient tentage can be supplied by Camp Las Casas. Our greatest need is large quantities of evaporated milk and "Force" as food for the sick, also medicines usually employed in influenza treatment; food, clothing for families of sick also needed badly especially in rural barrios. They become helpless immediately when stricken by disease or disaster."

The conditions as to the epidemic were brought to the attention of the American Red Cross, and a communication from that organization, bearing the date of November 27, was received, reading as follows:

"In Mr. Cutler's absence I am acknowledging receipt of your letter of the 26th addressed to him with reference to influenza epidemic conditions in Porto Rico. We have been following this matter very closely and cabled Mr. Hartzell, chairman of the Porto Rico chapter, some days ago, an appropriation of \$20,000. Our field director, in cooperation with the Porto Rico chapter and its branches, are actively in the field, doing whatever is possible for them to do."

"As a result, undoubtedly of your request, we are advised by Surg. Gen. Blue, of the Public Health Service, that they are making a special investigation of conditions and will communicate again with us on Friday or Saturday. In the meantime we are advised by Mr. Hartzell that a special session of the Legislature of Porto Rico is being held to-day, and that special appropriation will probably be made. This we believe will carry them over for a few days until Gen. Blue's report is received. Upon receipt of this report we shall be able to act intelligently and know whether further appropriations are necessary by the Red Cross. If it is found that such action is necessary, I have no doubt that it will be taken."

"I hope that you agree with me that the action which has been taken and the investigation now under way will care for the matter for at least the next few days. Mr. Cutler will probably communicate with you further, himself, upon his return from New York, where he has gone for the holiday."

Accompanying this letter was a cable from Mr. Hartzell, chairman of the Porto Rican chapter, dated November 26, as follows:

"Have drawn on you additional \$5,000, to be used for urgent epidemic relief, making total drawn against new credit \$15,000. Report shows at least 100,000 cases influenza, spreading rapidly over the entire island. Are closing schools, churches, cinemas, and other gathering places. Keeping in constant touch with our 76 branches, cooperating with public health and governor; legislature meeting to-morrow will undoubtedly make appropriation for urgent relief, but will require additional funds for Red Cross. Please answer if we may draw additional funds. Impossible leave here under present conditions."

In the matter of needed supplies to cope with the conditions in the island, which were furnished so far as possible the following from the governor at San Juan is submitted:

Cable from the governor, December 2:

"We are in need of a large number of Army cots for the victims of the epidemic. Military authorities of Camp Las Casas have already furnished all they can spare. Please send us at the earliest possible date 5,000 cots for this purpose."

Cable from the governor, December 7:

"Referring to telegram from your office of the 5th instant, rice and evaporated milk, military authorities in Porto Rico has no rice on hand and can not furnish evaporated milk to health department for use in epidemic. Health department has purchased lately a large quantity of evaporated milk in local market and has sufficient on hand for the present. Food commission has just received advice several shipments of rice belong to them are on the way to Porto Rico, and with the arrival of which they expect the rice shortage will be relieved."

"Referring to telegram from your office of the 4th instant, malted milk, health department does not desire to use it. Many thanks for your offers."

In this connection, a cable message received by the Surgeon General of the Army from Dr. Lippitt, chief medical officer, Camp Las Casas, San Juan, P. R., under date of December 2, is repeated:

"Conditions of epidemic influenza very grave. From outbreak of epidemic, military authorities have rendered all assistance possible. At present on epidemic duty 28 medical officers, 17 enlisted. Have offered personnel for 300-bed hospital including medical officers, nurses and enlisted men. Will assist so far as allowed by needs of command. Commanding general has loaned cots, blankets and food supplies. Supply of rice practically exhausted. Urgent need of food supplies, including rice, evaporated milk. Supply of appropriate medicines nearly exhausted. Recommend shipment first steamer from New York quinine, aspirin, or equivalents; Dovers powders, ammonium chloride, or other expectorants, purgatives, antipneumococcic chloride, polivalent serum, pneumococcic vaccine."

The following is the text of a letter received from the American Red Cross, dated the 4th ultimo:

"Porto Rico had an epidemic about six months ago of some disease similar to influenza; this was regarded by some persons as truly influenza and by others as dengue. It was properly called the three-day fever; it was mild in type and lasted in its acute stage only three days, in general."

"There was no further trouble with influenza until on or about November 1, when it appeared in Camp Las Casas. The camp was comparatively free and the quarantine lifted on or about November 15, the quarantine lasting in the neighborhood of 14 days. The disease was mild in type."

"As was to be expected the influenza spread either from the camp or its original source, into the general population of the island. The island is so small and congested that the epidemic was able to progress rapidly. Our latest information is that there is an estimated number of 100,000 cases of influenza in the island. These are mild in type."

#### "THE RED CROSS ACTIVITIES.

"The insular and foreign division upon the request of the Porto Rico chapter, cabled the sum of \$20,000 to be used for influenza relief. A few days later it advanced for the same purpose an additional sum of \$10,000, making a total of \$30,000 which has been placed by the insular and foreign division at the disposal of the Porto Rico Red Cross chapter."

"This division has not yet had time to receive a statement from the Porto Rico chapter of the detailed plans and methods which the Porto Rico Red Cross

ve adopted, for the expenditure of this money. We will endeavor to secure is information as soon as possible, and place it at your disposal, as requested, be used for your information and to prevent useless expenditures."

A special session of the Legislature of Porto Rico was, on November 26, summoned by the governor especially to consider and take action upon the urgent and alarming situation of the people of the island caused by the epidemic, and

December 4 the governor wrote the bureau as follows:

"The legislature is struggling with the matter of combating the epidemic influenza and of earthquake relief. The difficulties brought about by these two diseases, following each other so closely are tremendous, and, of course, the legislators are greatly puzzled and perplexed. Please do all you possibly can secure prompt action by Congress in regard to both matters.

"The United States Health Service and the military authorities are doing, think, all they can with the resources at their disposal to help us.

"I cabled you a request that all of the medical officers now in the camp be kept in the service for the present, for the reason that they can render more effective aid in combating the epidemic if they remain under the orders of Dr. Lippitt than if they should be discharged from the service.

"I also cabled for the assistance of the Secretary of War in sending down promptly medicines, cots, and certain sorts of foodstuffs for the sick, all of which are falling short of our needs in connection with the epidemic. Our Commissioner of health has himself been stricken with the disease and is now out of service on that account."

On December 11 he cabled as follows:

"Legislature has adjourned. Appropriated \$500,000 for epidemic relief. I do not know whether we can find all the money, but some taxation was provided. People here can not understand why Congress has not recognized the existence of this calamity and aided in some form. I do not believe that the Senate or the committee does not mean to assume an attitude of indifference, if they do, they do not correctly represent the feelings of the people of the United States in this matter. I am contemplating an appeal to the American public for private contributions on large scale. Congress helped Martinique time of her great disaster, why not Porto Rico."

In response to a cable sent him on December 16 the governor wrote as follows under date of December 18:

"I have just received your cablegram of the 16th instant with reference to the one furnished us by the American National Red Cross in our epidemic work.

"The Red Cross have been exceedingly helpful in combating the epidemic and are still cooperating fully with our health department in this work; but

I understand it, most of the money used for this purpose has been and is now being furnished by the insular government, and as these financial contributions are very heavy, the strain on the insular government is tremendous under the circumstances in which we are now placed. But, as I cabled you, the legislature at its recent session appropriated half a million dollars for this purpose, and we shall try to find the money to meet this appropriation if it will prove necessary. I shall probably cable you in regard to this matter in a day or two. I am glad to say, however, that the general situation as to the epidemic has improved. In some municipalities it seems to have run its course; elsewhere the number of cases is diminishing, and I hope that soon throughout the island the peak of the load will have passed. Of course, our chief difficulty has been all along with the poor living out in the rural 'barrios,' who are always pretty close to the starvation, and when an epidemic of disease gets amongst them they have to be aided on a large scale in the matter of food and clothing, not only for the sick, but for their families. The number of deaths is far reported is between 3,000 and 4,000."

And cabled as follows on December 21:

"Referring to telegram from your office of the 16th instant, appropriation for epidemic control, Red Cross have expended in combating epidemic \$17,000 to date, while the insular government has expended \$219,000. The situation now greatly improved, and we can probably handle it ourselves, but you can see where the expense has fallen from above figures. Please explain this to chairman of congressional committee."

CHAS. C. WALCUTT, Jr.,  
Acting Chief of Bureau.



Mr. Sisson. Have you any general statement you desire to make about it?

Mr. DAVILA. Yes; I want to make a statement about the matter. The flu became epidemic in Porto Rico on the 1st day of November. At about the same time we had an earthquake, and the difficulties brought about by these two disasters were tremendous, and, of course, the legislature had a very difficult situation confronting them.

Mr. Sisson. Is the legislature in session now?

Mr. DAVILA. Not now; it has been adjourned. But it was called in special session by Gov. Yager on account of the epidemic and the earthquake. I want to quote a part of the letter written by Gov. Yager to the Bureau of Insular Affairs in regard to the matter.

Mr. Sisson. What is the date of that letter?

Mr. DAVILA. The 6th of November. He says:

The legislature will be compelled to appropriate a considerable sum for this emergency; and this, taken together with the earthquake expense, and all the other extra costs for war work, sanitation fiscal and moral, presents a situation that is truly appalling, but the Porto Rican people are brave. In spite of everything they oversubscribed by more than \$600,000 their quota for the fourth liberty loan. They deserve all the consideration and help that Congress can give them, and I feel confident that Congress will help if the situation is properly presented.

Mr. Sisson. That letter was written in November?

Mr. DAVILA. On November 6.

Mr. Sisson. Have you had any information since that as to the condition of the flu?

Mr. DAVILA. As you know, the epidemic in Porto Rico is now almost practically over. We had 100,000 cases of influenza on the Island at the end of November, and it is estimated that the number of cases will reach 150,000. We had not any money in our treasury at the beginning of the epidemic. The president of our senate, Mr. Giorzetti, and Senator Benitez advanced to the people of Porto Rico the sum of \$40,000 in order to give some assistance to the people.

Mr. Sisson. Out of their pockets?

Mr. DAVILA. Yes. The Legislature of Porto Rico voted \$500,000 to relieve the situation; but, as Gov. Yager says, we do not know that we will be able to find enough money to do all of the necessary work yet to be done unless some additional assistance is provided. According to the statement made by Gov. Yager on the 21st of December, they had expended in Porto Rico \$219,000, and the Red Cross \$17,000. We are almost in bankruptcy; we have no money, and this \$100,000 will greatly help Porto Rico. This money will be welcome, because it will help serve to pay our debts. The influenza is not over yet, as you know, but it is almost over. I had a letter from Gov. Yager on the 11th of December, from which I want to quote:

Legislature has adjourned. Appropriated \$500,000 for epidemic relief. I do not know whether we can find all the money, but some taxation was provided. People here can not understand why Congress has not recognized the existence of this calamity and aided in some form. I do not believe that the Senate or the committee does not mean to assume an attitude of indifference, or, if they do, they do not correctly represent the feeling of the people of the United States in this matter. I am contemplating an appeal to the American public for private contributions on a large scale. Congress helped Martinique at time of her disaster, why not Porto Rico?

I have here a joint resolution passed by the Senate appropriating \$100,000 to combat the influenza in Alaska. I want to call your at-

tention to this matter because, in my opinion, it is very important. Alaska has nearly 50,000 inhabitants, while we had in Porto Rico more than 100,000 influenza cases; so there is no comparison between the two countries. I favor an appropriation for the people of Alaska, but I think we must take into consideration the population of Porto Rico and grant some help there. At the same time you must remember the help the people of Porto Rico have rendered to the United States in this great struggle. We have always been ready to do our bit. We are very small, but according to their capacity the people of Porto Rico have always been ready to help this great Nation in its struggle against Germany. If this bill for Alaska is approved and the Congress of the United States does nothing to relieve the condition of the people in Porto Rico I am afraid it will create an adverse sentiment in Porto Rico, because they will believe that some discrimination has been made between the two countries, and there is no reason to make any discrimination. Our case is stronger than that of Alaska, and if Alaska is going to get this money I do not see any reason why the people of Porto Rico should not get the same amount.

Mr. Sisson. Let me make this suggestion: The Indians in Alaska are rather in the nature of wards of the Government. They do not vote; we took all of Alaska. The Indians had Alaska when the Russians went there and took it from them and all of their lands. The United States Government did not take all the Porto Rican land. The Porto Rican people own their land just as they did under the old Spanish occupation. Porto Rico is in the same situation as a State of the Union. The people there have the right to own property, buy it, cultivate it, or dispose of it as they see fit. So you must take into consideration that when the Federal Government does something for the Indians it is doing something for a people whose lands it took away from them. It took all the Indians' lands in Alaska; the result is that they do not do anything but trap, although when Russia came over they were the people who owned the lands; Russia took the lands away from them and sold them to us, and when we bought the lands from Russia we did not pay anything to the Indians for them. So the Indians are a very peculiar people and there is a very peculiar obligation placed upon the Federal Government in connection with them. No State has such claims against the Government; there is no such moral obligation on the part of the Government to the people of New York, the people of Maryland, or Virginia; they have their own local governments, own their own lands, and collect their own taxes. So the two cases could not be put upon the same plane at all, because after you go and take all the people's property away from them you certainly ought not let them starve. It is true the Indians did not do anything but hunt and trap, but we got up there with our railroads and our telegraphs, got business up there, and the Indians caught the flu, I suppose, from our folks.

What is the assessed value of the property in Porto Rico and also what is the population of Porto Rico?

NOTE.—Assessed value of property in Porto Rico, \$182,739,484; population (last census), 1,118,000.

Mr. DAVILA. I want to say that your statement is entirely correct, but it seems to me that this is a time when the Government should help the people of Porto Rico, because they are now compelled to borrow money in order to carry on the Government.

Mr. Sisson. I will read you a paragraph from the letter sent to you by the acting chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, under date of December 28, 1918:

Referring to telegram from your office of the 16th instant, appropriation for epidemic control, Red Cross have expended in combating epidemic \$17,000 to date, while the insular government has expended \$219,000. The situation is now greatly improved and we can probably handle it ourselves, but you can see where the expense has fallen from above figures. Please explain this to chairman of congressional committee.

Mr. DAVILA. The thought there is that any relief which Congress may give will help Porto Rico.

Mr. Sisson. You see what he wants done there is to reimburse the treasury of Porto Rico for the money that has been expended.

Mr. DAVILA. Not precisely to reimburse, but to pay for food, clothing which have been used on credit and 5,000 cots that I understood have been sent to Porto Rico by the Bureau of Insular Affairs.

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